



Doc H's Blog

Kentucky Education Commissioner
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Changing the Way Educators Learn

For this week's blog entry, I asked Associate Commissioner Felicia Cumings Smith to author a piece about professional learning. Felicia's staff in the Office of Next-Generation Learners is keenly aware of the need to rethink the way Kentucky educators engage in training and learning to support their students and ensure their success.

As Kentucky continues to lead the nation with its college- and career-ready agenda, it cannot deny the critical role that professional learning plays. Being selected by [Learning Forward](#) as the Demonstration State for Implementing the Common Core Standards has enabled us to elevate the discussion related to professional learning and begin to analyze what steps are needed to support educators becoming more effective in their teaching and learning practices.

A report -- *Transforming Professional Learning in Kentucky: Meeting the Demands of the Common Core State Standards* -- authored by Linda Darling-Hammond (Stanford University) and Barnett Berry (Center for Teaching Quality) offers a look into the professional learning policy landscape in our state. Several recommendations deserve our immediate attention as we seek to ensure that all students have access to highly effective teaching, learning and assessment practices that will prepare them for college and career success.

In particular, the following suggest shifts in practice for a systems approach to professional learning for Kentucky educators:

1. creating a "culture change" around professional learning — particularly with use of time during and beyond the school day; accessing/capitalizing on internal expertise; and focusing more on learning than on complying with a time requirement for professional development hours
2. ensuring there is coherence and integration of professional learning systems — between higher education and P-12 (transition, remediation, preparation, professional learning/recertification)
3. developing a clear vision of professional learning and growth that translates into practice for all (ultimately, ensuring equity in students' access to effective teachers, leaders, and learning experiences)

The aforementioned document may be found on the Kentucky Department of Education's website [here](#). The work of the Professional Learning Task Force, which is comprised of individuals representing teachers, administrators and partners, is referenced throughout.

As Kentucky continues to build momentum for meeting the state college and career readiness goals, professional learning and educator effectiveness will be foundational to these conversations.

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Office of Next-Generation Learners